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THE FLORAL ALPHABET OF THE CELTS

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In an address given before the Botanical and Biological Societies of Washington the writer showed that a number of plant species, for example *Arctostaphylos unedo* and *Erica mediterranea* (Mediterranean heath) range from the north-African plateau northward to southwestern Ireland, and that the Iberian flora, properly speaking, ends in Ireland. Attention was also called to the fact that the plants in question are absent from Great Britain proper. Zoological records also indicate a similar boundary separating Erin from Great Britain.¹ Ethnology, however, cannot produce any such line of cleavage, for the "Celtic"² stock is readily recognized and identifiable throughout Great Britain, France, and Spain, not to mention Ireland itself. Celtic dialects, moreover, still survive, though in altered form, in Galicia, Brittany, Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Wishing to clear up, if possible, the origin of certain very old words in my mother tongue, the Swedish language, I was led into the study and exploration, so to speak, of the Celtic field. The Celtic alphabet itself was truly a revelation; the poetic Celt had a floral alphabet all his own, nearly all of his letters were named for trees or shrubs, and his very life may be said to have been wrapped up with a sort of primitive botany. The letters of other languages,—Hebrew and Scandinavian for example, were originally symbols of surrounding objects or names of deities. The Celt alone confined his alphabetic symbolism almost entirely to the plant world.

We are wont to designate as "dark ages" those days when an insignificant fraction of the human race was literate, and modern times as the age of light. We hold ourselves immeas-

¹For a detailed account of the Iberian elements in the Irish flora see Præger's "Tourist Flora of Southwestern Ireland."

²The word "Celtic" is used throughout this paper in the commonly accepted sense, *i. e.*, applying to the Gaelic inhabitants of the British Islands and France.

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urably above our heathen forefathers, both as to intellect and civilization. *But*, how many of the mechanics of our day have either the patience or the ability to fashion the implements that were used by our forefathers? How many (the birdmen excepted) would risk the elements on the high seas in small crafts as did the Viking, the "Celt," or the Phoenician of old? Truly, the human race has advanced immensely in certain directions, and relapsed in others, but the *intellects* of antiquity were fully equal to those of today. It was the vision and vivid imagination of the ancients, that led them to high endeavors whereof no feat stands out in more shining glory than their development of astronomy. The high type of intelligence of our prehistoric forefathers is amply proved by the invention of their respective alphabets. The untutored, uninitiated multitudes of those days referred to the writings of their own leaders or bards as *runes*. "Rune" is a truly "Celtic" word and is still in present day dictionaries. In Welsh it is called *rhin*. It has several meanings as: Secret, mystery, deceit, craft, subtlety; a purpose, design, intention, etc. We are wont to apply this word to the Norse alphabet. It is one of hundreds of words that have survived in the Scandinavian dialects from pre-historic Celtic times, for the Scandinavians received them from their old friends, the Gauls. That even the Latin language rests in part upon a Celtic substratum is indisputable. The same reasoning applies to the old Norse language and its derivative, the English. Therefore, the Celtic language and its lore are, to a great extent, our own, and their cultivation and preservation is a duty devolved upon us,—a duty which should be much more precious since it would tend to establish an unbreakable intellectual entente between kin now separated into distinct linguistic groups: The Romance, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Scandinavian.

To return to a consideration of common factors of the various centers of European civilization, we meet with the alphabet of the Celt, the alphabet of one of the oldest languages of Europe.

The first letter of the Celtic alphabet (as will be seen in the following figure) is *ailm*, or "A." Although *ailm* has been associated by some with the pine or palm there is stronger philologic ground for deeming the word as signifying the Wych elm (*Ulmus montana*), *ailm* thus being cognate with English

elm and Latin *Ulmus*. Furthermore, the pine and the palm are called *giubhas* and *pailm*, respectively, in the Irish language. In Italy, the native elm (*Ulmus montana*) bears a number of vernacular names of which *ulem* is the most significant. The range of this tree seems to coincide with or somewhat exceed the limits of the old Celtic dominions.

COMPARISON OF ALPHABETS AND VERNACULAR NAMES

LETTERS	GAELIC (IRISH)		ENGLISH	ANGLO-SAXON	RUNES	OLD NORSE	SWEDISH	LATIN
A	À	Ailm	Elm	Elm		Almr	Alm	Ulmus
B	b	Beith	Birch	Beorc	ᚢ	Biork	Björk	Betula
C	c	Coll	Hazel	Hæesel	ᚦ	Hastl	Hassel	Corylus
D	ḍ	{Dair Darrach	Oak	Ac		Eik	Ek	Quercus
E	e	Eadha	Aspen	Aesp		Osp	Asp	Populus
F	f	{Fearn Fearnog	Alder	Air		Airi	Al	Ainus
G	ḡ	Gort	Ivy	Ifiq		Bergfletter	Murgróna	Hedera
H	h	Uath	Hawthorn	Haguthorn		Hagthorn	Hagtorn	Crataegus
I	i	{Ioda leo	Yew	{Iw leow		Yr	{Id Id-gran	Taxus
L	l	Luis	{Rowan Quicken-tree	Quic treow		Reynir	Ronn	Sorbus aucuparia
M	m	Muin	Vine	Winbeam		Vintrae	Vinranka	Vitis
N	n	Nuin	Ash	Aesc		Askr	Ask	Fraxinus
O	o	Oir	Spindle-tree	—		—	Spindelträd	Euonymus
P	p	Peith-bog	—	—		—	—	—
R	r r	Ruis	Elder	{Hylder Eilen		Hyll	{Flader Hyll	Sambucus
S	s r	{Sail Suil Seilach	{Sallow Willow	{Sealh Welig		Selja	{Salq Vide	Salix
T	t	.Teine	{Fire Furze	Fyrs		—	Gul-torne	Ulex
U	u	Ur	—	—		Yr	Id-gran	Taxus

Of the plant names beginning with the initial letter, *Abhal*, the apple tree, is very striking. In Sweden, the word *Apel* is used in the various provinces by the peasantry to denote the apple tree, the word *äppleträd* being confined mostly to the books.

The most striking word perhaps in modern Irish, if we may be allowed to digress a little, is one of the words for the Deity, *Aos* or *Aosar*. In Scandinavian, this very word *As* (*Aos*) and *asar* (*aosar*) is still applied to the first *God* of the old Norsemen and his associates, *i. e.*, to Odin, Thor, Frey, etc., the mythological first kings of Sweden. Is this word of Celtic origin, or

did the "Black Gentiles," as the Danes were called by the pagan Irish, introduce it into Ireland?

The letter B, *beta* in Greek and *beth* in Hebrew, is *beith* in Celtic, and is said to have stood for the birch, *Betula*,—most probably the common European birch (*Betula alba*) which is frequent on heaths, in woods, and mountain glens. This tree has nearly the same range of distribution as the European elm (*Ulmus montana*) and is consequently another tree of the old Celtic world. One of their most useful and ornamental trees, the birch entered into the fundamentals of the old Norsemen, since the letter B stands for *bjärkan* or *björk*, the birch, with them also.

There are a number of vernacular plant names in Irish beginning with the letter B, of which the following are the most noteworthy: *Beath* or *beathog*, the beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) was also known as *Beith na measa* or the "birch with the acorns." If we start somewhere in Sweden in the latitude of Stockholm (59° North) and travel southward, we traverse forest areas covered mostly with spruce, pine, or birch, and after having reached southern Sweden we enter the dominion of the beech which becomes the prominent species, contesting with the oak the first place among trees. The birch preferring the cooler regions becomes rarer on the lowlands as we continue southward. It is possible, therefore, that the old Celtic bards meant to honor the beech or *beith na measa*, rather than the rare mountain-loving birch, the *beith*. This view is the more probable if we consider the name of the old Irish alphabet, *Beath-luis-nion*, which translated into our language becomes "beech-quickened tree-ash." In this old Irish alphabet the first three letters were B, L, and N. The modern sequence of letters, beginning with *ailm* ("a"), was initiated by St. Patrick. This renowned man it will be of interest to recall was nicknamed by the Irish people *babloir*, *i. e.*, the talker,—literally prater or babbler. *Barbog*, or slender point, is the name for barberry bush. *Bealteine*, meaning Baal-fires, was the name given by the heathen Celt to Mayday in honor of the god Beal. The latter name brings us back to Old Testament days of Baal.

The letter C, in the Celtic alphabet, the equivalent of the Greek *kappa* and *chi*, is *coll*, and stands for the hazel bush. In the Viking language the letter H stood for the same thing, *i. e.*, *hastl* or *hassel* (*Corylus avellana*).

The old Scandinavians held the hazel bush sacred. Their "open courts" were enclosed by rods of hazel and it was considered a desecration to break into such an enclosure. A violator of this code became an outlaw, liable to lose his life if apprehended. The women were often protected by a similar enclosure; camping grounds likewise. The swift and summary punishment meted out deterred many a one from violating the sanctity within a hazel-fence. The famous divining rods were made of hazel. The hazel bush is celebrated in song, and one of the sweetest songs of old Sweden, one which is still sung by high and low, is a dialogue between a hazel bush and a little maiden going to the spring for water. Charlemagne directed the superintendents of his numerous estates to plant hazel. During the middle ages in Sweden, no one was allowed to gather hazelnuts from another man's domain. Whoever gathered more than a mitten full was punished by a fine. The French language has two words for this bush or tree: *Noisetier* and *coudrier*, the latter being derived from *coldre* of the old French language,—and presumably a prehistoric Celtic or Gallic word. Irish literature and folk lore are full of stories involving shrubs, trees, fairies, etc.

The Irish dictionary gives a large number of plant names beginning with the letter C. *Crann* and *craobh* are the words for "a tree" and a great number of names are recorded in which, as in the Latin language, the word *crann* is the noun followed by a modifying adjective or another noun in apposition: thus, *arbor foliis tremulis* becomes *crann crith*,—the tree trembling or the quaking aspen. *Crann ola* is the olive; *crann-pion*, the piñon; and *crann pobhuil*, the poplar. *Cal* or *coilis*, cabbage, is almost identical with the Swedish word *kål* and clearly cognate with English "cole" (in *colewort*) and German *kohl* (as in *kohlrabi*).

D stands for *dair* or *darrach*, the oak. The Welsh word is *dar*.

Strabo applied the word *Druidae* to the Celtic priests or rulers, the *Draothi*. It is doubtful if this word is at all related to *drus* the Greek word for oak. The Scandinavian word *Drott* was used for the Druids, and has nothing to do with the word for oak. The Celtic word is also spelled *Duir*,—a word which recalls *dur* hard, *durus* of the Latins. The original meaning of the word *drus* is tree, a meaning it had in the Sanscrit language. *Drus* may have been generally applied to the oaks by the old

Greeks, but these had other names for the various species as *balanos*, *aigilops*, *phellos*, etc. The modern Greek vernacular is *balanidia* for the species bearing edible acorns, while *phellos* is still used for the cork oak in Greece.

The Celtic name for henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) is *deodha*. A play on words may be permissible here, since *deodh* means *everlasting*, for whoever becomes too intimate with this plant might experience a sudden awakening in eternity!

E, or *eadhadh*, is the aspen (*Populus tremula*).

F, or *fearn*, is the alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). This word is still alive under the form *vergne* in France.

Under F are found a number of interesting Celtic words, as *fem*, woman, *frag*, also a woman or wife,—a word which recalls the German word *frau*. *Fuirneis* means furnace or stove, and *fuirne*, "THE BIG STOVE"! Attention might be called here to the fact that the Scandinavians dedicated their letter "F" to the peace god, Frey.

G, or *gort*, is *Hedera helix*, the ivy. The word has also another meaning as: garden, standing corn, a field. In the latter sense this word appears under many forms from *hortus* of the Romans to *gård* of the Swedes. The original application of the word *gort* has been lost.

Gairleog is garlic (*Allium sativum*). This word is said to be derived from the old Norse word *geir-laukr*. The plant, however, is native of Asia but this fact does not conflict with the name's being of Scandinavian or Gothic origin, for the daring Lords of the High Seas roamed everywhere.

Gasun, young boy, or *garçon* in French and, in Old English, *gossoon*, appears to be another word surviving from ancient Gallic times. Unlike the Irish language which survived, the vocabulary of Old Gaul became incorporated more or less into the resultant Gallo-Latin tongue, now the modern French.

Giubhas is the Celtic word for fir; it recalls the Latin word *Abies*, a probable derivative, since the common European silver fir (*Abies pectinata*) is a native of the old Celtic domain, including northern Italy. The Celtic dominions adjoined Macedonia at the time of Alexander the Great. The people therefore lived right within the range of the fir and this prominent species did not escape the observant Celt.

Guis, the mistletoe, was Latinized by the Romans into *Viscum*. I is *iodha*, the yew tree. The name appears under different forms as: *Iubar* and *iur*. The Celts seem to have recognized the relationship of the yew to the juniper, which fact is disclosed in the names given to these plants: *Iubar* is the yew and *iubar beinne* or *iubar creige*, the yew of the hill-top or crag, *i. e.*, the juniper. Both plants have the same range and practically the same habitat, although the yew prefers the beech and oak forests. The word *iodha* also means grief, and since the yew was generally planted about cemeteries, the word came to be applied also to the grave. The Celtic word is still alive in Swedish in the form of *id* or *id-gran*. The latter word means yew-spruce, the word for spruce in Swedish being *gran*. The derivation of *gran* is held to be from *grön*, green. Thus the spruce is first supposed to have been called *gröne-träd*, green-tree, and later on simply *gran*. Is this view right, or is the word *gran* simply another form of the Celtic *crann*? *Crann iodha* may have been another name for the yew. An inversion of the elements into *id-gran* in Swedish is very plausible, if not ascertainable, for in the old Swedish the adjectives followed the modified noun as in Irish and the Romance languages, instead of preceding the noun as in English.

The juniper was also known as *jubhar talaimh*, or the yew of the ploughed land. The word *talaimh* (genitive *talaimh*) is of interest to us since it is of Hebrew origin and was probably incorporated in the Celtic tongue by that colony of Celts which had emigrated to Miletus, the descendants of which later went to Ireland.

L in Celtic is *luis* and stood for the mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*). The English name rowan-tree is derived from the Old Norse language. In Swedish it is *rönn*.

There are a great number of plant names beginning with L. These are made up of the words *lus* and *lusan*, meaning herb and little herb, respectively, plus a modifying adjective. Thus we have: *Lus-mor*, plant big, *i. e.*, foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*); also applied to the common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*); *lusan-bhall*, flower of the walls, pellitory (*Parietaria*); *lusan-baine*, milkwort (*Polygala*); *lus na miol mor*, flower of the whale (*Malva sylvestris*); *lusan airige*, noble flower, daffodil; *crom lus*, bent flower, poppy; *lus na-fola*, blood plant, shepherd's purse; *lus-na-h-ordhche*, nightshade, belladonna.

The word *blath*, meaning flower, is also used in compound words of this kind, as: *Blath-na-licuig*, the flower of the grave-stones, *Iris* sp.

M is named *muin*, the vine. Under this letter we find a number of names of important economic plants. Of these names the compounds of *meacan* are the most important. The word *meacan* means root or bulb, and appears in such plant names as: *Meacan buidhe* or yellow root, the carrot; *meacan dogha*, burdock; *meacan each* horse radish *meacan righ*, king root, parsnip; *meacan ruaidh*, red root, radish.

N, named *nuin*, stood for the ash tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*). There are a number of more modern forms of this name. There are only a few plant names under this letter. *Neep* or *neup fhiadhain*, the turnip, recalls *napus* of the old Romans or *Brassica Napus* L.

O, named *oir*, stood for the Spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*). Few Gaelic plant names begin with the letter O. Of these, however, the following deserves some notice: *Oirp* or *norp*, in French *orpin*, is the name for the house-leek (*Sempervivum tectorum*), a member of the Orpine family (*Crassulaceae*.)

P, named *peeth-bhog*, *i. e.*, soft B, does not stand for any plant in the Irish language. Cameron ("The Gaelic Names of Plants") assigns *peeth* to the pine (*Pinus sylvestris*); the name for that species however, is *giungas* in Irish (*guithas* in Scotch).

There are a number of plant names under this letter among which are: *Plur* or *flur*, a flower or blossom, of which *fluirein* is a diminutive. These words also signify flour or fine meal.

Paipin, the word for poppy, according to Cameron, is a corruption of the Latin word *Papaver*. *Paipin ruadh* is the red poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*). The juice of this plant was often put in children's food to make them sleep.—the original Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup!

Paipin duhb is the black poppy (*Papaver nigrum*). The Manxmen call it *lus y chadlee*, the plant for sleep.

Papaver somniferum, the white poppy, is called *codalan* or *collaidin ban*. *Codalan* in Irish means a nap or "*somnus brevis*."

Pacharan chapull is the bog bean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). The leaves of this plant were formerly smoked as tobacco.

In conclusion it might be well to state that interesting as is the gateway to the Celtic Garden, *i. e.*, its alphabet, the interior

of the garden opens up wonders of beauty and quaintness undreamt of by the uninitiated. Nowhere do we find quainter and more striking music than in Ireland and nowhere do we find a greater love for and higher development of music, art, and literature than in the old Celtic dominions, *i. e.*, France, Spain, Italy and perhaps southern Germany. In the United States of America the descendants of the "Celts" are with us in large numbers and their great heritage should neither be neglected nor forgotten.

SOME RECENT EXTENSIONS OF THE KNOWN RANGE OF *PINUS PALUSTRIS*

ROLAND M. HARPER

The long-leaf pine, *Pinus palustris* Mill., is such an abundant, conspicuous and unmistakable tree that its natural distribution was long ago mapped with reasonable accuracy, and no noteworthy additions to its recorded range seem to have been made since about 1880, when it was found in the mountains of Georgia and Alabama by Dr. Charles Mohr and others.* Its distribution as known 25 or 30 years ago is shown on Plate 3 of Mohr's *Timber Pines of the Southern United States*,† and that represents pretty well our knowledge today, except that it extends down the east coast of Florida to about latitude 28°, and eastward in Middle Georgia to within a few miles of Atlanta, and probably does not come as close to Vicksburg, Miss., as is indicated by the map.‡

A large outlying colony of this pine in the northern part of Walker County, Alabama, has been known for some years,§ and in the spring of 1922 I was informed by Mr. B. M. Luf-

* See *Torreyia* 5: 55. April 1905.

† U. S. Forestry Bull. 13. 1896. (Revised 1897.) As far as *Pinus palustris* is concerned this supersedes Dr. Mohr's forest maps of Alabama and Mississippi in the 9th volume of the Tenth Census, which are not very accurate.

‡ A map on page 3 of W. R. Mattoon's bulletin on long-leaf pine (U. S. Dept. Agric. Bull. 1061; dated July 29, 1922, but apparently not published until a few months later) represents it as extending over nearly all of Florida, Alabama and Louisiana and more than half of Mississippi, but that is an unwarranted exaggeration.

§ See *Geol. Surv. Ala. Monog.* 8: 54, 141. 1913. I have not visited that place since 1906, but a railroad has been built to it since, and doubtless much of the timber cut out.